SINGING IN THE PRESIDENTS

Campaign Ditties from the Time of the Federalists to the Stormy Days of the Bull Moose

By R. CARY TEALL

IN A few weeks the American voter will be energetically and repeatedly harangued by stump speakers urging the merits and demerits of President Wilson and his Republican opponent of the campaign of 1916. There will be wardroom rallies, sharpshooting by carttail orators, massing of heavy artillery on the platform of packed halls. The harassed candidate will be roused from uneasy slumber to address from the Pullman platform his fellow citizens bent on getting their "money's worth" for staying out so late. And there will be nights of parades that send lines of kerosene torches zigzagging joyously the long way to hot coffee, ham sandwiches and mince turnovers—at once a reward and persuasive overture to an address of Websterian length, whatever may be thought of its intellectual quality, on crying needs of this "great and glorious country." The brass band will blare, wherever the campaign committee has the price. But the citizen comfortably blessed with yesterdays will listen in vain for the campaign song.

Where are the bards of yesterday, the extollers of "Presidential timber" in other years? In recent campaigns there has been little to stir them in the quality of issues, the personality of candidates, or the temper of the American people. Perhaps the principal reason for disappearance of the campaign song is found in the fact that the generation is emotionally cramped by grinding pressure of fierce competition to succeed; of fiercer competition to survive. And its political leaders, with rare exceptions, are not men of picturesque character, such as would stimulate to song.

To be sure, there was a notable ditty in 1912, the "Houn' Dawg" song. But it was not born of the year, only appropriated by Speaker Clark's followers of those piping days before Mr. Bryan, by an interesting operation, removed the Speaker from the list of Presidential possibilities—

I don't care if he is a houn'—
You got to quit kickin' my dawg aroun'—

Behind the melancholy Missouri pup stretches the arid waste of recent years. Who sang the praises of William Howard Taft, or Alton B. Parker, or William Jennings Bryan? It was McKinley, the gentle, the suave, that suffered the distinction of praise in "barber shop" tunes of 1896. One Republican ditty of that year ran, in part, as follows:

We know of a man tried and true,
Of the people he is the first choice—
When the third of November sees the day's light
He'll sit in the President's chair.
Chorus: And his name is William McKinley.

With more zest Democrats chanted in 1892—

. . . Grover! Grover!
Four years more of Grover,
Then we'll be in clover.

How sapless these lays of later days compared to outpourings of times when every citizen, if not a "king," was in the most personal sense a politician. Rivalry arrived with the retirement of Washington. A very lively jingle was sung by Jefferson's supporters of 1800—

The Federalists are down at last,
The Monarchists completely cast,
The Aristocrats are stripped of power,
Storms o'er the British faction lower.
Soon we Republicans shall see
Columbia's sons from bondage free!
Lord! How the Federalists will stare
At Jefferson in Adams's chair!

Campaign literature was little enriched by song writers in the campaigns of James Madison and James Monroe. But Andrew Jackson stimulated them to energetic verbosity. His military record was his principal political asset at first, so they made much of it. Several stanzas celebrated his victory over Lord Pakenham at New Orleans—

You've heard, I s'pose, of New Orleans;
It's famed for youth and beauty;
There are girls of every hue, it seems,
From snowy white to sooty.
Now Pakenham had made his brags,
If he that day were lucky,
He'd have the girls and cotton bags
In spite of Old Kentucky!
But Jackson, he was wide awake,
And was not scared at trifles,
For well he knew Kentucky's boys,
With their death-dealing rifles.
He led them down to cypress swamp,
The ground was low and mucky;
There stood John Bull in martial pomp,
And here stood Old Kentucky.

For General Benjamin Harrison, a candidate of cold manners, Republican shouters of 1888 parodied the song that gave his grandfather's (William Henry Harrison) reputation more endurance than any chronicle of the historian. It was the song of "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too," with play on Harrison's victory over an Indian army of the "Prophet" in the battle of Tippecanoe River:

What has caused the commotion, 'motion, 'motion,
Our country people through?
It is the ball a-rolling on, for Tippecanoe and Tyler, too!
Oh, yes, with them we will beat Van!
Van is a used-up man!

Let them talk about hard cider, cider, cider,
And log cabins, too—
It will only help speed the ball for Tippecanoe and Tyler, too!

The latch-string hangs outside the door, door, door!
And it is never pulled through,
For that is not the custom of old Tippecanoe and Tyler, too!

The "vested interests" and the "peepul" were not yet named, but the issue they later personified was drawn. If Tippecanoe was the champion of the common man, Martin Van Buren, who desired a second term, must be a soulless servant of the rich—

That Matty loves the workingman,
No workingman can doubt, sirs;
For well he doth pursue the plan
That turns the workers out, sirs!

He turns them out of Whig employ,
He turns them out of bread, sirs;
And middlemen doth he annoy,
By striking business dead, sirs!

For Matty is a Democrat,
Sing, Yankee Doodle Dandy!
With spoons of gold, and English coach,
And servants always handy!

The dinner pail arrived as a campaign exhibit in the Clay-Polk campaign, and they sang of protection then—

The gallant Whigs have drawn the sword
And thrown the idle sheath away;
And onward is the battle-word,
For Home Protection and for Clay!

Clay's followers announced their organization as the same "old coon" that had won four years before—

The moon was shining silver-bright,
The stars with glory crowned the night,
High on a limb that same old coon
Was singing to himself this tune—
Get out of my way—you're all unlucky,
Clear the track for old Kentucky.

When Polk won his supporters celebrated with a parody of "The Burial of Sir John Moore"—

Not a cheer was heard, not a single shout
As away to the ditch they hurried;
No bank-paid orator rose to spout
O'er the hole where that coon was buried.
So rapidly tumbling him all alone
With his tail's wounded stump quite gory,
They raised a faint shout, 'twixt a cheer and a groan,
And left him alone in his glory.

Not content with dubbing him "the Pathfinder of the Rockies," supporters of John C. Fremont delighted to describe him as "the mustang colt" that must distance Buchanan, an "old gray nag." And they raised their voices in a song of considerable vigor—

The mustang colt is strong and young,
His wind is strong, his knees not sprung.
The old gray horse is a well-known hack,
He's long been fed at the public rack.
The mustang is a full-blooded colt,
He cannot shy! He will not bolt!
The old gray nag, when he tries to trot,
Goes 'round and 'round in the same old spot!
The mustang goes at a killing pace,
He's bound to win the four-mile race!
Then do your best with the old gray hack,
The mustang colt will clear the track!

"An old gray hack" was the most complimentary name the Frémont men had for Buchanan. One song writer painted him in these lines:

The dough, the dough, the facial dough!
The nose that yields when you tweak it, so!
It sighs for the spoil—it sells its soul
For a spoonful of pap from the Treasury bowl.

For signing the Clay Compromise bill Millard Fillmore was complimented in the following stanzas:

There lives a man in Buffalo,
His name is Millard Fillmore,
Who thinks the Union's sunk so low
It ought to take one pill more.

To purge away the "prejudice"
Which true men have for freedom,
A canting, pompous wretch he is
Who'll cheat you if you heed him.

Old Mill Fillmore, not another pill more,
In our mouth
The quaking South
Shall ne'er put a pill more.

Campaign songs of 1860 were marked by bitterness. A favorite with the Douglas wing ridiculed the personal appearance and homespun reputation of "Honest Abe"—

Tell us he's a second Webster,
Or, if better, Henry Clay;
That he's full of gentle humor,
Placid as a summer's day.

Tell again about the cordwood;
Seven cords or more a day;
How each night he seeks his closet,
There alone to kneel and pray!

Any lie you tell we'll swallow—
Swallow any kind of mixture;
But, oh, don't, we beg and pray you—
Don't, for land's sake, show his picture!

Andrew Johnson's "swing around the circle" was satirically celebrated to the tune of "Just Before the Battle, Mother":

Just before election, Andy,
We are thinking of most you;
While we get our ballots ready—
But, be sure, they're not for you!
No, dear Andy, you'll not get them,
But you'll get what you deserve—
Oh, yes, you'll get your leave of absence
As you "swing around the curve."

CHORUS.

You have swung around the circle,
That you ought to swing, 'tis true;
Oh, you tried to veto Congress,
But I guess we'll veto you!

When Grant first ran for President his ardent supporters phrased their fervor in terms of "Auld Lang Syne"—

Should brave Ulysses be forgot,
Who worked so long and well
On fields where fires of death were hot
And brave men fought and fell?

And inevitably they sang of Appomattox—

So, boys, a final bumper
While we in chorus chant,
For next President we nominate
Our own Ulysses Grant.
And if asked what state he hails from,
This our sole reply shall be—
From near Appomattox Court House,
With its famous apple tree.
For 'twas there to our Ulysses
That Lee gave up the fight.
Now, boys! To Grant for President,
And God defend the right!

It was a different story when he wanted the Republican nomination for a third term.

James A. Garfield's humble youth was serviceable to party songsters when he ran for President. As an illustration of pure doggerel the lines following serve admirably:

He early learned to paddle well his own forlorn canoe;
Upon Ohio's grand canal he held the helium true;
And now the people shout to him, "Lo, 'tis for you we wait!"
We want to see Jim Garfield guide our glorious ship of state.

In this year of grace a Republican inkslinger might parody "Mr. Dooley"—

Oh, Mr. Wilson! Oh, Mr. Wilson!
How ever did they come to let you in?

But he is not likely to do so. For the citizen of the present is not interested in competitive singing. By day he is too busy in pursuit of the dollar of his daily bread to think much about politics; and at night, if he is not more interested in poker or his daily paper, he prefers travel by trolley to marching, and would rather listen to a band than exercise his vocal cords. For him the battle of ballots, not a battle of bellows.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY . . . . By Rea Irvin

The jolly Sunday school picnic is introduced into New England, June 25, 1639.

WHAT DO YOU READ, MY LORD?

PARK ROW NEWSBOY—What d'yer read? What d'yer read?
PREOCCUPIED PERSON—Why—er—er—"The American Journal of Ethnology." Have you it?

The Know-It-All Young Author and the Still-Sane Editor

By CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

"BUT," the Know-It-All Young Author was saying to the Still-Sane Editor, "I haven't time to send stories to the magazines. In the first place you don't pay enough to make it worth my while. What's three or four hundred dollars from you, for a story it would take me a month to write, compared with a thousand from one of those movie people for a scenario, or a synopsis, that I can dash off in a day or two?"

"'Dash off' is just the phrase," answered the S.-S. E. "But things 'dashed off' don't live very long. My dear young friend, you're not really learning to write; you're learning to outline. You are to literature what the poor girl in the factory is to the beautiful embroiderer. She stamps a design on a bit of cloth, like a machine; the embroiderer comes along and does some creative work; she blends colors, and sometimes works far into the night. She doesn't say much; but when it's done—well, it's worth looking at, and keeping and loving and treasuring. The little machine-made design may or may not have been followed. The artist stepped in and decided. Seriously, are you writing for money or for fame?"

"For both," quickly responded the K.-I.-A. Y. A.

"But haven't you a preference? Answer me truly."

"Well," the Young Author stumbled a bit, and wouldn't quite look the editor in the eye, "if I could have only one, maybe I'd take the money."

"So! Just as I expected," replied the editor; but there was not so much surprise in his voice as his words would lead one to think. "That's the trouble, then. You want fame—but you want money more! Well, if that's the case, you are on the right road, and I can't give you any advice. I thought I was talking to some one with ideals."

"You are!" promptly came from the Young Author. He was a little indignant now. "After I've written enough of these rotten moving picture scenarios, and made fifteen or twenty thousand dollars, I'm going to retire to a bungalow in the hills and write my play—an idea I've had in my head for years. I'll show them! I'll make 'em sit up!"

"How long will it be before you can begin that great and laudable work?" asked the patient Editor. He seemed deeply interested.

"Oh, maybe two years more—perhaps three. It all depends on how many of these stupid film plots I can evolve first."

The Editor's heart sank; but the Young Author did not know that. He simply thought he was making a fine impression. He puffed up a bit. He'd show this Editor chap before he got through with him! Ideals! Well, I guess yes! He had 'em, just as high ideals as Booth Tarkington, or Julian Street, or Edna Ferber, or John Masefield, or any of the others of that Big Bunch.

"But in the meantime," the Editor finally said, "you call the work you're turning out now 'stupid' and rotten.' In your soul you think it's bunk. Well, that shows, my young friend, that you have some ideals still. But how long can one go on writing bunk, producing sham goods, and get away with it? Aren't you afraid the moving picture people will catch on that you're not sincere—not as sincere, by half, as they are? And aren't you a little afraid for yourself—and of that still, small voice that we all have to listen to sooner or later?"

"Why?" cried the Know-It-All. "Why should I fear anything? I'm perfectly sincere. All this is simply a means to an end. I can't write my play until I have money enough to loaf a year or two. We all have to get ahead of the game. That's legitimate. That's good business. What difference does it make how I get it, so long as I get it? Tell me that, will you?" He puffed out again. He had this Editor chap, all right.

"It isn't legitimate, and you know it—down in your heart. No poor work is legitimate—unless your wife and children are starving. You haven't a wife, and you haven't children; so you have no excuse to offer. How I wish I could show you that the great play you dream of is dying now in your soul. The seed you have planted will never sprout—after a few more years of this sort of business. First of all, as I said before, you're not learning to write. You're only on the borderland of literature. Have you ever written a word of dialogue? No. Your synopses don't require dialogue. But if you were writing short stories for the magazines you would be learning not only how to make your brain children talk as real people talk, but how to surround them with life as it is—not how the screen wishes it to be. You would be learning how to create situations that really could exist; not blood-curdling Nick Carters that we all revelled in as boys, but soon discarded with lots of other trash. What preparation, I ask you, is the writing of a film thriller for the writing of a great American play? The two things are as unlike as serpents and Venus. The preparatory school for playwriting is in the magazines, not in the film studios. Is drama ever founded on a scenario? No; but it's often founded on a short story in a popular periodical. So you see that story writing and play writing are closely allied. Then, after you have your play, you have your screen version of it—another thing altogether, which some sublimated hack could hew out of the work of your brain. And you would still get your royalties! It would be perfectly legitimate and right for you to think of them, and want them then."

"Yes, the moving picture rights"—

"Ah! that's it! 'The moving picture rights, and having writ'— I can't go on. But there might be a scenario in it—the pun's bad enough to make a good one."

The Young Author had been deeply interested.

"There is lots in what you say," he remarked. "I had always thought of writing as—well—as something not to be taken very seriously until one wanted to take it seriously. A fellow could scribble along, and make enough to keep body and soul together, and have a motor, and—well, then suddenly put off the cheap form of writing, as he'd put off a garment, and go at something big and fine."

"If, my dear young friend, you are going on writing moving picture scenarios, put the best of yourself into them. Don't think you can succeed even in that field, scribbling in a dilettante, careless way, and laughing, the while, at your output. You've got to give all you've got to any line of endeavor. If you scrub floors, scrub them diligently and well. But don't think you are learning to become an architect. Write scenarios; but don't think you're becoming a dramatist. Earn less now, and more later. And write for the magazines first if you would write for the stage afterward. The editors want you now—indeed they do. They want your youth, your enthusiasm, your courage, your new point of view. If you are sincere, they want you. They want stories—which may afterward become plays—founded on the truth within you; stories written out of your young experience, but most of all out of your heart. To-day is yours, and to-morrow too. It's all very well for a man to write scenarios—after he's learned how to write dialogue and to create atmosphere and a sense of reality. If you want to write shorthand, you have to learn longhand first.

"Yes, the magazines want you and need you now. Later they may not."

Mr. Towne, who is managing editor of McClure's, believes that the average young author to-day is writing moving picture scenarios instead of short stories. In the May issue of "The Bookman" appeared a symposium of magazine editors upon the question "Why Are Manuscripts Rejected?" Mr. Towne wrote that in his opinion manuscripts are rejected, nine times out of ten, because they are unworthy. "We editors are so hungry for good material that we search eagerly for the new note, the new point of view—the new enthusiasm. Never was a time more propitious for the promising young writer . . . Where is he? I could give one guess. He is writing for the 'movies.' Lured by the alleged big prices paid for scenarios, he is evolving plots for Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin. But what is he creating that will endure?"

Mr. Towne here discusses the last question in detail.